DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 362 CG 032 462

AUTHOR	Bottoms, Gene; Cobbs, Mary
TITLE	Good News, Bad News and Actions for Helping Students Complete a Challenging Program of Study. Research Brief.
INSTITUTION	Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta, GA.
REPORT NO	No-13
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	6p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Southern Regional Education Board, 592 10th Street, N.W., Atlanta, GA 30318. Tel: 404-875-9211; Web site: http://www.sreb.org. For full text: http://www.sreb.org/programs/hstw/publications/briefs/97brief13.asp.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Advising; *Career Guidance; Education Work Relationship; Educational Counseling; *Guidance Programs; High Schools; *Noncollege Bound Students; Postsecondary Education; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; School Counseling

ABSTRACT

The 1996 "High Schools That Work" Assessment report contains positive and negative findings about the effectiveness of the high school advisement process in guiding career-bound students into challenging academic programs that will equip them for work and postsecondary study. The assessment of reading, mathematics and science performance was given to 12th-graders completing four courses in a vocational concentration at the Southern Regional Education Board's "High Schools That Work" sites. The assessment revealed that simply getting students to develop a four-year plan does not guarantee higher achievement. An effective advisement process enrolls students in "advantaged" academic courses rather than sorting them into low-level classes. Students who complete rigorous academic courses score significantly higher in reading, mathematics and science than those who complete less-demanding courses. This research brief highlights findings of the assessment and provides suggestions for how schools and educators can improve the quality of guidance and advisement practices. (GCP)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 478 362

Good News, Bad News and Actions for Helping Students Complete a Challenging Program of Study

Southern Regional Education Board
Research Brief Number 13

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M.A. Sullivan
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
1

CG032462

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG CGTR 0072

HIGH SCHOOLS THAT WORK

Research Brief

Number 13

SREB

Good News, Bad News and Actions for Helping Students Complete a Challenging Program of Study

by Gene Bottoms and Mary Cobbs

The 1996 *High Schools That Work* Assessment report contains positive and negative findings about the effectiveness of the high school advisement process in guiding career-bound students into challenging academic programs that will equip them for work and postsecondary study.[1] The assessment of reading, mathematics and science performance was given to 12th-graders completing four courses in a vocational concentration at the Southern Regional Education Board's *High Schools That Work* sites.

The assessment revealed that simply getting students to develop a four-year plan does not guarantee higher achievement. An effective advisement process enrolls students in "advantaged" academic courses rather than sorting them into low-level classes. Students who complete rigorous academic courses score significantly higher in reading, mathematics and science than those who complete less-demanding courses.

In comparing the guidance and advisement experiences of students at *HSTW* sites in 1993 and 1994 with those of students at the same sites in 1996, the SREB found good news in three areas:

- Almost twice as many students (73 percent) in 1996 as in 1993 and 1994 said they received information and counseling about continuing their education. (See Figure 1.) As a result, the percentage of career-bound students planning to pursue further study increased to 62 percent in 1996.
- The percentage of students who received help in planning a four-year program of study increased from 60 percent to 70 percent. Most received help from guidance counselors. (See Figure 1.)
- The percentage of students who were encouraged to take more mathematics and science courses increased from 50 percent in 1993 and 1994 to 59 percent in 1996. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1

Increases in the Quality of Guidance and Advisement Services at *High Schools That Work* Sites

Students said:	1993 and 1994	1996
They received help in developing a four-year plan.	60%	70%
Their parents were involved.	19%	23%
They received help by the end of grade nine.	47%	53%
They received information and counseling about further learning.	39%	73%
They received encouragement to take more mathematics and science courses.	50%	59%

[1] The findings are based on the performance of students at experienced sites that participated in the 1993 assessment but not the 1994 assessment, new sites that participated in the 1994 assessment but not the 1993 assessment, and both groups of sites that participated in the 1996 assessment.

Southern Regional Education Board

592 10th St. N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30318
(404) 875-9211
www.sreb.org

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The bad news is that guidance and advisement services did not contribute to improved student achievement from 1993 and 1994 to 1996. Students who said they met with a counselor or teacher to develop a four-year program of study scored lower in mathematics and science than students who received no help or had no plan. While almost two-thirds of students expected to continue their education beyond high school, only 20 percent completed a solid academic core that prepared them to succeed in postsecondary studies or to advance in a good job. (See Figure 2.) These results imply that many teachers and counselors still are channeling career-bound students into low-status academic classes according to an ingrained belief that many students cannot learn high-level content. Too many career-bound students are being "written off" by teachers and advisers who sort them into easier courses.

High-achieving *HSTW* sites are more effective than other sites at enrolling career-bound students in an upgraded academic core and a concentration. Students who completed the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum[2] met or exceeded the *HSTW* goals in reading, mathematics and science in 1996, and their scores were significantly higher than those of students who took lower-level courses. (See Figure 3.) In fact, students who completed the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum at high-achieving sites had average scores that began to equal those of college preparatory students nationally.

Figure 2

Percentages of Career-Bound Students Who Completed the *HSTW*-Recommended Academic Core

1996 high-achieving sites	38%
1996 all sites	20%
1994 all sites	3%

How can schools improve the quality of guidance and advisement practices?

Schools can motivate more students to take high-level academic courses by:

- Aligning guidance and advisement practices with reforms in curriculum and instruction. Guidance and advisement services can make a difference if they are aligned with the school's efforts to teach all students a more demanding academic core.
- Building "bridges" from the high school to middle schools, postsecondary institutions and the workplace.
- Involving parents, teachers and the community in helping students see the relevance of and purpose in school studies. Students are more successful when they set goals and develop plans for achieving them.

The following actions will help schools improve the quality of guidance and advisement practices:

- ***Shift the philosophical base of guidance and advisement from a belief that most students cannot succeed in high-level courses to a belief that most students can meet higher standards if the standards are accompanied by changes in instructional practices.***

High-achieving schools have shifted from low expectations for some students to high expectations for all. These schools give all students access to courses that teach the essential content and skills of algebra, geometry, statistics, biology, chemistry, physics, literature, writing, speaking and reasoning. High-achieving schools use guidance and advisement to unite the efforts of counselors, teachers, parents and the community in opening the "first door" to a quality future by enrolling students in challenging, focused programs of study.

- ***Encourage all students to take a carefully planned sequence of high-level academic courses and either an academic or a career concentration.***

High-achieving sites give career-bound students the same kinds of attention and encouragement to take the "right courses" that they give to the "best" students who plan to enroll in the "most prestigious" postsecondary institutions. Many career-bound students who plan to enter college after high school select an academic or a career concentration, which provides direction and confirms their interest in a career field. Young people who develop a focus during high school are better prepared to earn a college degree and to get a good job and advance in it.

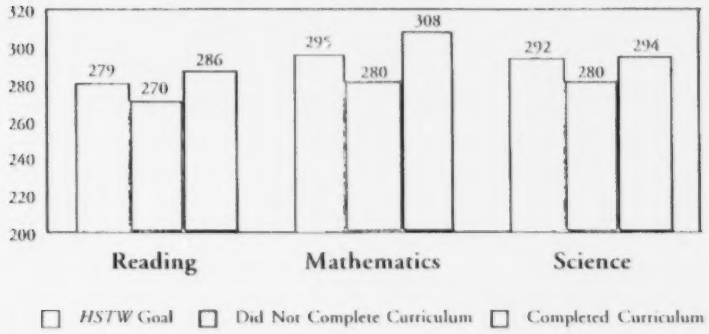
---

2 The *High Schools That Work*-recommended curriculum includes an upgraded academic core consisting of at least four units of college preparatory English and three units each of mathematics and science, including at least two units in each area equal in content to courses offered in the college preparatory curriculum. The recommended curriculum also includes at least four units in a broad technical field or an academic concentration and two units in related technical or academic core courses.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 3

Comparing Achievement of Students Who Completed the *HSTW*-Recommended Curriculum and Those Who Did Not



○ ***Make parents partners in getting students to complete a demanding program of study.***

The primary purpose of school and family partnerships is to improve students' ability to set goals, make wise decisions and achieve at a higher level. Students who talked with their parents about a program of study scored higher in mathematics and reading than students who did not include their parents. When parents are involved, students choose technical studies that fit their goals for after high school rather than selecting courses for "easy credit." An effective guidance and advisement system helps students and their parents set four- or six-year goals and develop a plan for achieving those goals.

○ ***Provide opportunities for students and their parents to see reasons to work hard in high school and to complete a demanding program of study.***

A good guidance and advisement system helps students see connections between their high school courses and their goals. Schools can use the experiences of recent graduates to make this connection obvious and to reinforce "reasons to learn." For example, a follow-up survey of 6,000 youths one year after they graduated from *High Schools That Work* sites in 1996 revealed that taking the right academic and career courses and meeting academic performance goals provided an edge in employment and further study. Specifically, youths who earned the *HSTW* Award of Educational Achievement[3] outpaced other graduates in a number of areas:

- Seventeen percent of award recipients — compared with 25 percent of those who did not receive the award — were unemployed at some time after graduation.
- Eighty-three percent of award recipients — compared with 56 percent of nonrecipients — enrolled in further study after high school.
- Only 15 percent of award recipients — compared with 31 percent of nonrecipients — were required to take remedial courses in college.
- Fifty-three percent of award recipients — compared with 25 percent of nonrecipients — enrolled in a four-year college or university.

Another way to encourage students to take the "right courses" and to work hard in them is to place students in a variety of job-shadowing experiences that will help them identify the knowledge, skills and postsecondary preparation needed to reach their goals. Teachers and counselors also need to explore a range of workplace experiences — such as job shadowing and internships — so that they will have a better understanding of changes under way in the workplace and what it takes to succeed.

○ ***Bring counselors and teachers together as advocates for enrolling students in high-level courses.***

In most high schools, the guidance program operates independently of teachers. Ongoing staff development will enable school leaders and teachers to advise students and their parents in planning programs of study. In schools with teacher-adviser programs, each teacher, administrator and counselor is assigned to a group of students. The adviser helps students plan a program of study, monitors progress and updates students and their parents on career issues and postsecondary

[3] The Award of Educational Achievement signifies that recipients met the *High Schools That Work* performance goals in reading, mathematics and science and completed three of four components of the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

opportunities. A teacher-adviser system provides ongoing, personal and varied advisement services to all students.

- ***Connect middle school, high school and postsecondary efforts to help students make smooth transitions.***

HSTW sites making the most improvement are more likely to have agreements with nearby community and technical colleges to give high school students access to postsecondary-level courses and to get high school and postsecondary teachers to work together to pave the way for students to succeed in postsecondary studies.[4] The most-improved high schools also join with middle schools to better prepare students to do work on the high school level. When high school and middle school guidance initiatives are coordinated, students and parents see the "big picture" of how school requirements are connected to post-high school goals. Some schools offer intensive advisement services before and during the ninth grade — a crucial decision-making time for parents and students.

What can educators do?

Counselors, teachers and administrators can take steps to align guidance and advisement practices with efforts to raise student achievement. They can:

- Create a study group of counselors and teachers to determine whether guidance and curriculum practices are placing students in high-level academic courses or in low-level courses based on past performance.
- Select ways to measure whether guidance and advisement practices are bringing about improvement. *High Schools That Work* sites have access to a number of data sources:
  - The *HSTW* Assessment of reading, mathematics and science also includes students' perspectives on the assistance they received in planning a program of study, the quality of the assistance, whether they had jobs while in high school, and whether their jobs related to their studies.
  - The *HSTW* Teacher Survey yields information on whether teachers actively assist students in planning and completing a program of study and in moving from high school to the next step.
  - A transcript analysis indicates whether students completing vocational majors met the English, mathematics and science requirements of the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum.
  - The *HSTW* Student Follow-Up Survey reveals what career-bound graduates are doing one year after high school. The report tells where graduates believe they should have received more help.
- Meet with parents and students at least annually to make sure students' courses and performance are aligned with their goals for after high school graduation.
- Work closely with middle schools to improve students' readiness for high school. Help all ninth-graders and their parents develop a program of study that includes an upgraded academic core and a career or an academic major.
- Ask postsecondary institutions to provide examples of the language arts and mathematics skills needed for enrollment in courses above the remedial level.
- Invite employers to share with students the qualifications, personal characteristics and skills needed to "get in the door" and advance in the workplace.
- Work with employers to increase the number of students who participate in planned work-based learning programs.
- Involve counselors in planning extra-help programs that enable students to succeed in accelerated courses.
- Place counselors on academic and vocational curriculum committees. Counselors can use their global view of the school to help teachers create relevant learning experiences and better prepare students for success in the workplace and postsecondary education.

---

[4] The source is a 1998 study of improving sites and declining sites conducted by MPR Associates Inc.

Gene Bottoms is senior vice president of the Southern Regional Education Board and director of *High Schools That Work*. Mary Coburn is director of special projects for *High Schools That Work*.

(98V09)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[X] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[ ] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").